PRISM

'90

PRISM

Spring 1990

the literary magazine of Peace College

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The Prism Staff expresses their sincere gratitude to Janet Harvey-Clark, Carolyn Parker, Linda Stevens, and Cindy Bell for their guidance and understanding.

Because one cannot walk and the other cannot see,
who am I to tell a tale of a child who wouldn't be?
Are these children of a lesser God,
a foe that can't be beat?
Or, are they all among the wealthy,
rich in the spirit of one's soul,
that soars upon the heavens and dwells
in man's thoughts?
Or, are they all among the ones placed as a
burden on the heart and an evil on the mind?
We must realize that we are all equals with complex minds, simply lost in unawareness of the ones less fortunate than we.

However, the world in which we live is passed through with closed eyes.

We're all children of a superior God, not children of a lesser God.

And for the ones that take these children less fortunate than we as a burden upon their soul...

They should stop, and look, and ask themselves...

Who am I to tell a tale of a child who
wouldn't be, when I couldn't be the
type of person that God wanted me to be?

Caroline Weeks

"Second Position-
Puppet Dance"

by Farrall Davis

Sit-ups (To my Health!)

I lie in a birthing position on the dirty carpet,
Hands interlocked behind my head.
Two feet propped on my bed act as a fulcrum
In this self-inflicted torment.

Elbows back!
Go for the burn!
I strain in my quest to pull nose to knees.

Looking upwards with a prayer for divine
intervention,
I see stuck in the white florescent light -
A dead moth.
It's wings mimic the awkward spread of elbows,
It's torture, unlike mine, complete.

For one instance, we are both stripped
Of the most minute speck of dignity
As we lie flat on our backs.

Stephanie Phillips

Eng 205, Creative Writing 3;15-4;40 MW

Imagination pads the walls
While profound observations and vivid images
Decorate the windows.

I find myself, an infant,
Longing to participate
In an adult world.

I wish I had that magical eyeball,
That possesses the ability to see beyond
Ryth, imagery, and unpatterned rhyme.

Lost in a sea of creativity,
I gasp for air from the atmosphere of simplicity.

I am the caboose,
Pulled by the insight of others,
But..."I think I can."

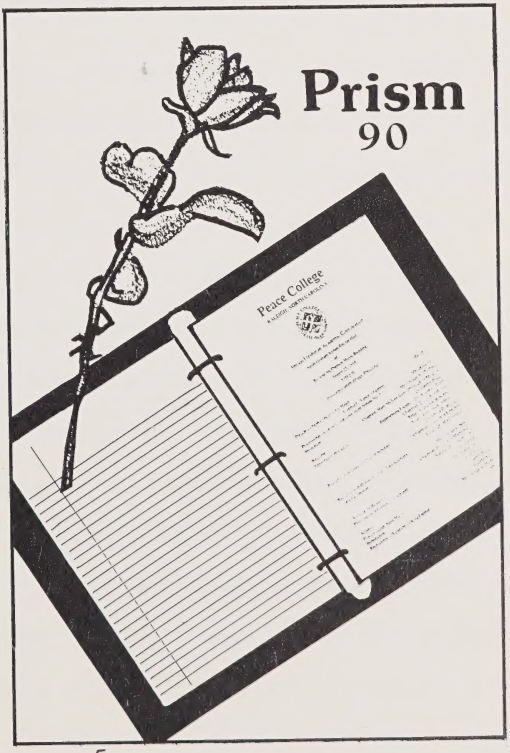
Lara Moore

Parting Peace

Amid the
boxed-up memories
in her de-decorated dorm room--
a blury-eyed Peace girl
Lost in yesterday.
"Today is my day."
she says,
as she sits
staring
at bald cream walls,
wanting expected-of-her happiness
to fill the
void.
Slowly she
picks up a
long white glove.
Slipping it on
with shaking hands,
she wonders
if her graduation roses
will leave a lingering mark
on the satiny newness,
like the one
Peace left
on her.

Gina Tozzi

by Gwen Rogers



The White Carnation

The telephone ring woke me up. Light shone beneath my parents' bedroom door, invading my room and stinging my eyes. I heard my mother speaking in hushed tones, first on the phone and then to my father. I strained my ears, but I couldn't make out what they were saying. My mother's voice was unnaturally squeaky and I could hear her deep breaths. They continued to whisper long after the light went out. I held my pillow over my head, but it couldn't block out the voice in my mind that was telling me something terrible had happened.

I awoke the next morning to my mother's tired voice at my bedside. I wouldn't start the fifth grade for another week, but she was telling me to get up and dressed.

"Aw, Mom! Why?" I whined. Then I remembered the late-night phonecall. I sat up and tried to focus.

"A-Aunt R-Rue d-d-died last night," Mother stammered. I stared at her in disbelief. Her beautiful eyes were swollen and heavy. There were lines around her mouth I had never noticed before, and her lip was trembling. I thought about her youngest sister. Aunt Rue? Dead? Why, she wasn't sick, and she wasn't even thirty years old. How could she die? The look on my mother's face told me not to ask.

The three-hour drive to Aunt Rue's house took longer than usual. We rode silently through the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. When we arrived at the brick house in Mooresville, the driveway was so full of cars that we were forced to park down the street. The house and yard looked much the same as before: Aunt Rue's red Toyota in the garage, bicycles and bigwheels strewn across the lawn, and a wrinkled pair of Nikes sunning on the front step. But something was different. The neighborhood kids weren't swinging on the gym set and the sandbox was empty. On the front

door, a large white bow fluttered mournfully in the wind.

No one made a fuss over me the way they usually did. In fact, no one seemed to notice I was there. I spent most of the day huddled in a corner of the kitchen by myself. People whom I had never seen before came in and out all day, bringing food and hugging each other. Some paused to ask me whose child I was and commented on my growth.

I was glad when my oldest cousin, Jenny, arrived in the afternoon. She scooted beside me and whispered in my ear. "Do you know what happened to her?"

I shook my head and leaned closer.

"She shot herself right through the head," she continued. "See over there," she pointed to a piece of silver tape stuck to the pine wall next to the telephone. "That's where the bullet went and that's why they pulled the carpet up this morning."

I couldn't believe my ears, and I stared at her in awe of her thirteen-year-old wisdom.

"Oh," I said, as if I suddenly understood the situation, "I see." But I didn't see and I certainly didn't understand. Did Jenny mean she did it on purpose? Why would she kill herself? She had her own house and a new car, not to mention two children who needed her. The more I thought about it, the madder it made me. I kicked the trashcan.

I had to wear a fancy dress the next day. My mother asked me if I wanted to see Aunt Rue one last time and I said yes, even though I wasn't sure. I'd never seen a dead person before. We drove to the funeral home and entered the silent chapel. My mother led me to a white casket in the far corner of the candle-lit room. She wore a mint green nightgown and there was make-up on her face. Much more than she would have ever worn, I thought, but other than that, she just looked asleep. I noticed a white carnation tucked behind her ear, and my eyes burned when I realized why it was there.

The minister talked for a long time at the funeral. I didn't really listen to what was being said; all I could think about was my favorite aunt locked up in that coffin. I thought about the time she taught me to fish at the lake and how we laughed all day. I remembered how she talked me into jumping into the deep end of the pool when I had never tried it before. She was the type of woman that let me dip my whole finger into a bowl of cookie batter instead of merely licking the spoon. There were so many wonderful things about her, but thinking about her only confused me more. I squeezed my mother's hand and asked the question that had kept me awake the night before.

"Why, Mommy?" She didn't say anything for a long time. Finally, she leaned down to answer me.

"I wish I could explain," she murmured, "But I just don't think you would understand." She passed me a much-needed kleenes.

My mother was right. At nine years old, I was too young to comprehend the circumstances of her sister's life. There were so many sides of Aunt Rue that I didn't know about. I was too young to know the woman who married at sixteen, only to be left alone and confused when her husband was brutally murdered when she was twenty-three. I didn't know she was a murder suspect fighting for justice in a world that shunned her. I never met the woman that lied and stole to support her drug habit. I didn't realize the trauma of facing unemployment while raising two children alone. No, I wouldn't have understood then--and I'm not sure if I do now.

Aunt Rue's suicide was a hard way for me to experience death for the first time. I've often felt angry with her over her senseless death, but now I'm realizing that no amount of anger could change the decision she made over nine years ago. As my mom says, it's best to learn from other's mistakes and live life to the fullest. I just wish it hadn't been Aunt Rue's mistakes I've had to learn from.

Anna McKellar

by Elizabeth Bennett

Pickup Truck

Sittin' high in my blue pick-up truck,
I'm Lord of the highway's double-yellow lines.
My four-wheel drive is any country boy's dream,
Only a tough-talkin', hard-fightin',
rough son of a gun
Can tame such a jacked-up monster machine.

Chasin' skirts or spinnin' doughnuts in the dirt,
Raise a mighty rebel yell,
Then go out and set loose hell.
But only if you're ridin' in a Ford pick-up truck.

Stars and bars are a sure sign
Of my down home Southern Pride,
So who needs a snotty college degree,
A posh office in a fancy high-rise building,
A stuffy, three-piece suit, or a Mercedes-Benz?

Honey, I got all I need for any good old boy's
dream:
A hard shell of cool steel protectin' a wild,
Revving engine
Body equipped with roll bars, KC Lights, and
trusty side pipes, a gun rack which just cradles
that Winchester like a mother would
her young'un
Yessiree!
Much to be said 'bout that blue monster machine.

Stephanie Phillips

Three on a Family Match

Three of shared laughter, hopes and dreams.
Leaf piles, dirt hills, and poison ivy clumps.

Three of blood, flesh, and genes.
Car rides, black eyes, and little gray lies.

Three so different but each from the same womb.
Hazel, blue, and brown eyes.

Three of individual performance,
one running in the rough,
one splitting the water,
one crossing the homeplate.
One conquered English, one Statistics, one
Physics A.P.

Three that grew from driveway play
to Interstate-85 days.
Universities, phone calls, and holidays come
and gone.

Three variations on theme, a triptych
of friendship, love, and understanding.

Julia Woodruff

Pseudo Love

Pain slip-slides
criss crossing cheeks--
cold, salty reminders
of scars still suffered.
Trust and Love--
her premises
Masculinity--
his excuse...

Love was not made tonight

only
hateangerhurtdisappointment
as his ultra-quick getaway
tread right through
her disillusion.

Gina Tozzi

"A Mere Suggestion"

by Anna McKellar

In the Name of Pride

Fear mounted like Stonewall's horses.
You were far from the steel factories of
Pennsylvania
and the cotton fields of South Carolina.

Plodding through fields of marsh that
suctioned up
over your once-black boots.

You were tired, uncertain and paranoid
from the pop and crunch of every
bending thread of weed
that fell before your moving feet.

Ducking from the blistering heat of a bullet
that was aimed at your head, the bulls eye.
You bent in the awkward shape of a fallen man
as shrapnel violated your
still-tender skin.

Lying there, no one seemed to care; jack rabbits
kept jumping hurdles,
mosquitoes kept humming Amazing Grace,
and bombs kept destroying what wasn't theirs.

You gave all you had so your parents could
frame the flag that was draped over you,
and salute what once was--
All in the name of America--All in
the name of freedom--All in the name of what?

Julia Woodruff

The Pearl

The day I came back to the room
I saw the pearl lying on the floor
beside our desks.
Instant memories flooded my vision
I saw numerous trips to the craft stores
I saw the laughter always between us
I saw the nights we made earrings together
I saw the next day when we said unknowing
last good-byes
and I remembered how the pearls would roll
off our desks.
Time and again I will see that pearl
on the floor
always having moved to a different place,
but it remains to remind me of she and me.
I dread the day I have to pick it up and put it
Away.

Meredith Swing

Here's To All The Losers

It's true what Emily Dickinson once wrote,
"success is counted sweetest by those who never succeed."

So here's to all of the losers...

If you stayed in limbo and never tried to achieve, tell me,
wouldn't your life be a total bore?

If you just sit back and watch other go forward,
how can you know that you're not capable of joining them?

If you never make the effort or add any input,
how can you criticize the jobs others do?

If you hesitate and never taste a new food or buy a different brand of socks,
how can you know your likes and dislikes?

If you never try to learn, or change an old habit,
how can you know that there is not something more you could be?

If you never test your strengths or go out on a limb,
how can you possibly know that you'd fail?

If you just exist within your own world,
how can you know you don't have something others really need?

How can you know, how can I know that to be a winner all you have to do is try and try and try.

Julia Woodruff

Switching Seasons

Teetering between
childhood springtime
and inescapable summer.
Wishing to return
to soothing
maternal breezes,
and romp and play
in the toddling greenness.
Once carefree in the coolness,
Somehow seasons switched.
Indignantly I seek
freedom sunlight.
I am warmed by its
grown-up glare.
Now.
My time
to face the sun.

Gina Tozzi

Z

I am translated to omega.
I am excluded from the telephone
punch pad.
During your midafternoon nap,
you catch me.
Replaced by x in xylophone,
I lend my sound to s.
In the land of the bees, I am
the dominant language.
I decorate the bottom of your
"Zips".
I am the end,
I complete the alphabet,
and I am the last letter
used in Scrabble

...yet I count the most points.

Lara Moore

"Fall Tapestry" by Anna McKellar

Destiny Diner

"Hello, what will it be?"
"Coke or Pepsi?"
The question burns.
"A choice, please."
BMW or Volvo?"
The Fashion of tomorrow:
    The thrift store and spiked hair
        or
    Bill Blass and a bob?
Rap or rock?
What's the highest paying job?
    Law or the mob?
the best stock:
    Fond or Suburban Bancorp?
How to beat your biological clock
    oat bran, my friend?
    low cholesterol margarine?
That's the menu that sells,
The delightful entrees that tomorrow ponders today
With cancer on every corner
AIDS at high tide
Warning labels: "hazardous to your health"
    Lining every grocery store shelf
Death on the bathroom floor
The landlord, knocking on the door
Outside tunnel vision the dead end of Skid Row roams
Children without a home
Marriage -- until the divorce papers are here
Convicted mass murderer up for probation this year
A fog has settled over Capitol Hill;
No one seems to know who made the deal
Jelly-glaze on the news today
Compulsory hunger strike
News brief:
    Football players demand another pay hike
"So, what will it be -- Coke or Pepsi?"

Angela King

Self Portrait

My eyes are not in focus.
My song is way off beat.
My walk is not in step.
My summer ends in March.

My Jamaican hand-rung tie-dye
won't match my Polo-socks.
All my life I've been a circle
trying to fit into a box.
I rock-n-roll to Beethoven
and ramble in the rain.
I lose more than I win,
but I ignore the pain.

I laugh in the face of death.
The Flintstones make me cry.
I say good-night to all my fish
and wait for a reply.

Julia Woodruff

West of the Equator

There is an equator that runs through all of our hearts as we are a part of Peace College. Really, I should say an equator that should run through our hearts making it difficult for us to sleep if we have any sensitivity at all. This equator is the difference between black and white, poverty and wealth, freedom and inability. The equator has a name, East Franklin Street. This littered street separates the rich from the poor and the auspicious from the unfortunate as it separates Peace College from Halifax Court public housing. I suppose now you know the equator of which I speak. Maybe you know it well. However, I am sure that most of you do not think twice about it unless you forgot to lock you car door last night. In spite of this, I tell you that I have watched these residents, and in a lot of ways, these people are no different than any one of us. Yes, that's right. I'm comparing you to a world that you have probably never known. So please, don't take offense. Just think about what you are reading.

From the outside, the differences are obvious. Facing north, on the right side of East Franklin Street, there are immaculately groomed gardens with trimmed bushes and cut grass, parking lots full of sports cars, and big red brick buildings that contain the hopeful futures of five hundred and fifty bright, smiling young women. On the left side of this great equator, the total opposite is in effect. There is a field of brown grass with black, rusty monkey bars, an empty parking lot

full of litter, and small, tan apartments that hold the dreams of many smiling faces that will never even have the opportunity to make their dreams come true.

I've seen these faces, heard their laughter through the day, been awaken by their gun shots at night, and wondered what was lost when the ambulances pulled past Finley dorm late at night. Well, I am sure that these residents of Halifax Court have seen us too. Their eyes follow us as we work in our rooms, as we get in and out of our cars, and as we walk around the Peace campus. The crucial difference is how we see ourselves and how they see us. The parents and children of Halifax Court see us as the holders of the lives that most of them can only dream of knowing. The children want to be a part of the things which we take for granted. You ask me, "How would you know that?" Well, just the other night, two young girls from the public housing area were walking down the street singing as they came within speaking distance of me. I smiled and said, "What are you two doing out so late?" Their cold, brown faces said, "What the hell are you doing speaking to us," while their mouths said, "Crazy rich girl, just go on home."

That was a hatred that was not caused because of who I am, but because of what I represent. To those two girls, I was the enemy. They had probably assumed that I felt like I was doing my good deed for the day by speaking to them. I realized, however, that we think we see things that might not be necessarily true in their lives either. We see the life that we thank God none of us ever had to live. Right? We see the dirt and suffering and

assume that these people refuse to help themselves. But the biggest difference is that many of the Halifax residents see the fact that most of us didn't get ourselves here. Our parents' money allowed us to go to school in order to get a valuable education.

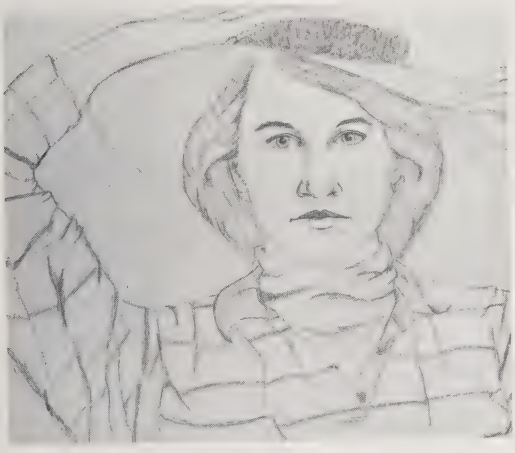
So, who is right and who is wrong in the assumptions being made? Those two girls more than likely couldn't help the environment that they were thrust into, just as we have nothing to do with the environment that we were born into. What did we do to deserve all of this? And in the same breath, I have to ask, what did they do to deserve what they got? I'm not quite sure.

Yet, I am sure of one thing: it is up to each of us to help ourselves in order that we may be able to help give these people some courage to live their lives which may seem hopeless and full of despair. See, all of the Christmas parties and good deeds in the world cannot give these people what they need in order to start a stable, hopeful life. In effect, our temporary pity may make it easy for us to sit back, pat our stomachs, and feel less guilty for having an easy life. But this self-assurance hardly does the people at Halifax Court any good. They need our love and our long-term help. With these things, they may just have a better chance at escaping their hopeless environment.

The other night, I was just trying to be nice. I need the same love and concern that they do, that we really all need. But the equator keeps dividing us, and only both sides can move that equator at East Franklin Street which separates the poor from the

wealthy and the white from the black. Deep down, I promise that we are all made from the same atoms of flesh, blood, bones, and emotion.

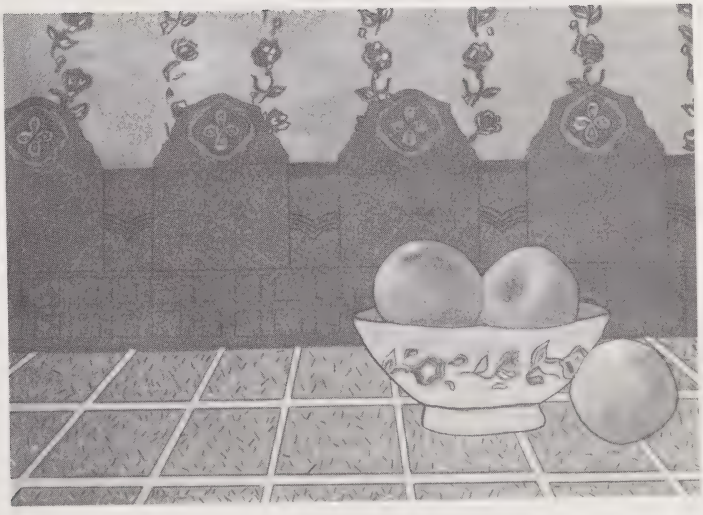
Julia Woodruff



by Stacy Davenport

"The Even Popular Still Life"

by Kim Melvin



Living is Easy

John Lennon peered
into the world from behind solemn lenses,
full circles of knowlege,
Boyish charm and witty comments admired
bycommoners and royalty alike,
yet he gave the hononary medal back
discovering that love is not
all you need...
Beholding naked, poverty-stricken babies
dying, freckled soldiers,
he wielded a shield make of melody
and lyrics of sagacity
against the iron-fisted foe...
Firing bitter accusations at an older generation,
(never trust anyone over thirty)
his boyish innocence festered into black rage.

But his faithful companions
in search of flowers and sun
forgot their reasons for wanting
free love
And one day, an unknown follower
stole the breath of his teacher.

Perhaps the sure darkness of death was soothing for Lennon
Who, having mysteriously grown past thirty,
found that his cherished flame
had long since died for his students anyway...
"...strawberry fields forever."

Stephanie Phillips

Weary Traveler

Bright yellow blouse, tweed pants suit,
white shoes
Why was she sitting in a train station
at 12:18 on a Thursday night?
Her face red, flushed--
a woman forced to age.
Slim, blonde, brassy, like the six
gold chains around her neck,
long brown cigarette too.
And she turned--
to the only other white person
in the station for conversation.
Where was she going?
Why so tired-looking?
And, would the mistakes I make now
leave
me,
tired looking--
Old, but young,
sitting alone in a train station
early in the morning?
No, I thought,
I'll be successful--
maybe this is what she thought too.
I don't know,
maybe she is. Julia Woodruff

Last Vestiges

The roar of streaming water
beating the plastic floor of the shower--
interrupted only so often by the moving figure
inside.
She steps out,
and her feet slap wettily upon
the slippery tile.
"Scary thoughts"
gone now
as she
dries herself in the silent cool air.
The only sound
is the quiet brush
of the towel
whipping around her body.
She reaches for the door
and feels invigorated throughout
as she walks out into the hall.
She smiles down at him
sitting on the couch
looking up at her.
Thinking about the evening ahead
she turns and heads toward the room,
padding softly across the carpet.
Once in the room
she begins to dress
feeling the chill of the cool air--
so unlike the protective heat
of the shower
and so uncomfortable;
But not like
the silver blade
so quickly
swishing through the air
interrupting life
in seconds.

Meredith Swing

Long Life

I-C-U icon--
Grandaddy.
Lost inside a
quelled-by-Cancer-shell.
Months before mourning,
we wait
as death is drawn out.
Days drip by
like
Lackadaisical IVs.
We wait
wondering
if each day
brings him closer,
or takes him further
away.
Medusa waits
to turn him
to stone.
Strange it is,
to see her coming
and call her
Relief.

Gina Tozzi

The Carousel Horse

Happiness is all around me,
Laughter and gaiety are engulfing,
Yet my seeming leap is false
and I remain alone
in the crowd
and when the crowd goes
home.

No joy from within, from the soul,
only stone cold indifference,
a painted smile hides my absence of thought,
a stone pole, my skeleton, holds me
in place.

On the outside I am appropriately arrayed.
Bright colors, pretty ribbons, twinkling eyes,
Writing and whirling constantly in all directions,
Yet bound to my obsolete location.

Someday I will escape this frozen figure,
This timeless, endless being,
but now I am slowing, fading, rusting,
just as the carousel stops with the winder.

Sonya Eubanks

"Table Conversation"
by Farrall Davis

I Think I Missed Something

I sat with my feet dangling over a cloud
Looking down upon the faces below

"Did I miss That??"
My eyes piling forward
"Hey, wait for me!"
"Here I am!"
"Look out below!"

But Gravity defied me
He pushed me back
And shook his finger:
"Aaa, ah."

Upon my stomach I lay
Little red faces all so plain
Hands tightly clasped
"Oh look! They're playing my favorite game:

"Red Rover, red rover, send Sara right."

"Red Rover, Red Rover, send Sara right over."
And Bill, and Dawn, and Jennipher
Callie and Cliff...

All day I listened
But never --
Not even once --
Did I hear my name

Angela King

Circles in the Sand

I grew up along the inland waterways of southeastern North Carolina where the marsh grass grows green and tall in the indigo waters, and the sun rises high out of endless horizons, setting slowly and steadily beyond the weeping willows along the sandy borders of Banks Channel. Each golden day, I loved to catch the sun rising during brief, yet spectacular moments, when its rays touched the quivering waters, glittering in the shallow depths of the channel.

My summer days were filled with excitement as my brothers and I explored the creeks and marshes for hours at a time, our bodies bronzing in the blazing sun. Our childhood was a perfect one, growing up knowing nothing but the love of God and of our parents, and the sea and all of the mysteries and adventures it had to bestow upon Laurence, Matt, and me. Our days consisted of excursions in our army-green john-boat as my brothers and I adventured through the meandering waters in the low tides of Bradley Creek. In the morning Laurence would submerge the crab pots, which Matt would retrieve on our return inland in the evening. Most days we were unfortunate in our crabbing adventures, our pots inhabited by one or two small crabs. But on some days we felt we were the luckiest children in the world, as Matt would pull the chain attached to the rusty cage below, its weight heavy beneath his calloused hands. "Look here,guys," Matt would exclaim, "we've got nine or ten of the bluest blue-crabs I've ever seen!

Bessie's going to have a time cooking them up tonight!" The laughter in Matt's voice reflected the smile in his eyes, mirroring the image of the Carolina sun casting waves of light in the trickling sea below us.

On those humid summer nights I would lie awake in my bed, my windows open wide. There I could rest undisturbed for hours listening to the endless gathering of mysterious sounds. Those long, hot summer nights were filled with surprises as my imagination lingered on journeys into the darkness of my surroundings. Eventually, I would fall asleep to soft winds whispering through the willows and the lullabies of the lapping waves.

Growing up, if I had only known what the future was to hold, perhaps I would have cherished those untarnished moments instead of letting them be carried out with the morning tides. Nearly two years have passed since my brother's death. I am constantly reminded of him in every red-headed young man I see, in the morning sunrises over the channel, and in the sound of the collapsing waves slapping the wooden dock in the stillness of the night.

I do not think I will ever forget the events that took place the day Matt died. There was not anything extraordinary about that particular day except, of course, that my brother was murdered. It was a typical Sunday afternoon. Laurence was home for the weekend from the university in Raleigh. We had just returned from church and we were eating Sunday dinner. Matt had been playing in a tennis tournament that weekend at the country club.

Everything seemed so normal that day. I suppose subconsciously we were all expecting Matt to come barreling through the door at any moment, tennis racquets slung across his shoulder, his face red and glowing from the heat and excitement. None of us knew that we would never see Matthew alive again.

"Lord, make us thankful for these and all our many blessings. In Christ's name, for His sake, Amen." Those words rolled off my father's tongue as the sweet aroma of southern fried chicken, green beans, and candied yams mingled in the air, making my stomach growl with hunger.

"Laurence, what time are you going back to Raleigh this afternoon?" Mama asked, pushing the loose ends of her penny-colored hair behind her ears.

"I'm not sure," Laurence replied. "I promised Matt and Mary Claire I'd pull them water-skiing this afternoon before I leave. I probably won't go back until 4:30 or 5:00."

"Good! It's a perfect day for water-skiing," Mama added, then glanced at her watch. "What time is Matt supposed to be home? I thought he would have been through on the courts by noon."

"I think he was going to stay at the club to watch the match being played after his," I answered. "I forgot to tell you that he doesn't want us to wait on him to eat. He's going to grab something on the way home."

The conversation at the dinner table continued among the clinking of silverware and the settling of glasses. Daddy and Laurence talked about school; Mama and I spoke of our plans for the upcoming summer. Then the doorbell chimed.

"I'll get it!" I exclaimed. "May I please be excused?"

"Certainly, Honey, thank-you," Daddy replied with a smile as the conversation between the three of them continued.

As I made my way through the dining room and into the foyer, I hesitated for a moment, peering through the bay window overlooking the waterway. A couple of miles out two rusty white shrimp boats, their nets lowered, patrolled the harbor. The low tide had uncovered most of the jetty, revealing remnants of the old Mason lighthouse which used to stand proudly on its tip, as if protecting all of the homes and estates on the mainland. The weather had been stormy all week, but now that the rain had subsided the sky was mint blue and cloudless; the waters were shades of cornflower and periwinkle; the jade-green grass was accented by tulips, daffodils, and azaleas. I was startled out of my trance when I heard a knock at the front door.

"Mary Claire, aren't you getting that?"

"Yes, Daddy!" I replied.

Approaching the door, I caught a glimpse of a stiff gray uniform through the window panes lining the door: the uniform of a sheriff's deputy. My heart sank when I noticed the nervous look on his face. Immediately,

I knew that something was not right. I tried to call for Daddy, but my voice was gone, drowned in fear. The only sound I could hear was the clashing of the forks in the dining room. My body was paralyzed with the knowledge that something terrible had happened. I reached out and grasped the brass doorknob. Turning it slowly, I opened the door as the catch clicked loudly, echoing in the still, silent hallway.

As the deputy entered the house, our eyes met. His were an expressionless steel gray--the same color as his uniform. I was trying my damnedest to read his face--to decipher the puzzling message that he was here to deliver. He stood there, his cold uniform contrasting against the warm burgandies and blues entwined in the Oriental rug. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other, his hands clasped tightly behind his back. "I think I'll go get my father," I told him.

"Yes," he replied, his voice husky. "I'll wait here for him."

I walked hesitantly to the dining room, taking a deep breath as I went. "Daddy, I think you need to come here for a minute." He must have noticed the scared look upon my face, or heard the trembling rhythm in my voice, because he quickly wiped his mouth with one of Mama's white linen napkins and came straight into the foyer where I stood.

"What is it, Mary, what's wrong?" When his eyes met those of the deputy, his face showed fear, puzzlement,

and apprehension all at once. Daddy glanced first at me, and then back at Deputy Benson. He, too, knew that something terrible had happened.

"Are you Mr. Harris?" the deputy inquired.

"Yes, sir. Is something wrong?"

Deputy Benson pulled something out of his shirt pocket. It was Matt's driver's license, frayed at the edges. "Is John Matthew Harris, II., your son?"

"Yes he is," answered Daddy. "Oh God. Is he in some kind of trouble?"

"Yes, sir," stammered the deputy. "I mean, I'm sorry, sir...your son is dead."

The blood drained out of my father's handsome face. I just stood there, shocked and helpless.

"Bill, what is it, who's at the door?" I heard Mama's frightened voice from the dining room, then her high heels clicking across the hardwood floor as she approached the hallway. Laurence came right behind her, lingering in the shadows in the door frame. Clinging to my father's side, Mama's chestnut eyes looked deep into Daddy's, searching for an answer as to what was going on.

He hesitated only for a moment. "Matthew is dead, Claire!" my father cried. Mama screamed a shrill, chilling cry, then fell to my father's knees.

Daddy turned numbly back to Deputy Benson. "What happened to my son?" he asked.

With a trembling voice, the deputy told us how Matt had died. "He was shot to death during a robbery."

"No! No!" Mama sreamed between sobs. "He was murdered?" Mama continued to cling to my father's knees.

"I am so sorry, sir, ma'am. I don't even know all of the details, and some of what I do know is confidential."

"But that's my son!" my mother cried.

"I am sorry, ma'am. It just isn't my place to tell you everything that happened. The detectives working on the case will be here this afternoon to speak with the two of you. He will be at liberty to tell you much more than I can at this point. I am sorry--believe me I am. But I can only tell you briefly what I know."

"Yes, I'm sorry--please tell us everything you can," Daddy said, his voice slow and fading. Mama stood up, still clinging to my father.

"From what we know Matt was standing in the take-out line at the deli across from the mall on highway seventeen. He was about to pay for his meal when a gunman entered the store and attempted to rob it. There were signs of a struggle. The gunman tried to shoot the cashier when your son intervened. He took the bullet intended for the cashier. The gunman put one hollowpoint bullet through his back. That's all it took. He died instantly."

I still do not remember too clearly what happened in those next few hours. All that I do remember was Mama screaming and Daddy holding her, staring straight ahead at me, with tears streaming down his cheeks. He did not say a word once Deputy Benson had told us how Matt had died. I remember hearing the back door open and then

slam shut as Laurence's feet pounded heavily down the back stairs. Still numb, I turned and thanked Deputy Benson and walked him out to his car. My entire body continued to shake, and I had a strange gnawing feeling eating away at my stomach. He explained to me that someone would need to go down to the morgue to identify Matt's body, and he suggested that we ought to call an uncle or a cousin or some other relative to do it. I think he was trying to tell me that Matt was so disfigured that it would not be a good idea for Mama or Daddy to see him. I solemnly agreed, and Deputy Benson offered me his sympathies, climbed into his patrol car and drove away, disappearing around the bend.

By this time, I did not know whether to run, trying to find Laurence--I thought he'd be down at the waterway--or to go inside and try to comfort Mama and Daddy. I continued to mull over the deputy's words in my mind: "He's dead...robbery...hollowpoint bullet...he's dead...I'm sorry." Inside, I felt empty and very much alone.

I heard a car pulling up around the bend. A navy blue ford: it was Reverend Bardin. To this day, I do not know how he found out so quickly about my brother's death. He parked his car and climbed out of it slowly, gently closing the door behind him. "Mary Claire," was all he said--it was all he had to say as he took me in his arms where I sobbed. The two of us stood there in my front yard holding each other, both of us crying, with the clear blue sky arching above us, the daffodils and

tulips dancing in the light afternoon breeze, and the waves lapping gently, rhythmically along the shoreline.

We buried Matt on a day that should have been his to celebrate. It was the day before Easter Sunday, which would have been his eighteenth birthday. The quiet smell of death hovered in the air as somber people dressed in black, grays, and navies shuffled away from the graveside and toward the extended line of cars parked alongside the winding, narrow cemetery road. The melancholy mood contradicted the clear blue sky as our friends eased themselves into their cars, preparing to drive off into their own worlds of stability and happiness, leaving us to mourn our loss.

When it was time for us to leave, we climbed into the limousine without saying a word. Mama got in first, accompanied by our father. Laurence helped Grandma in, then I climbed in, sliding towards the middle to leave room for Laurence. On the ride home the world itself seemed dead and silent except for the consistent, annoying humming of the funeral car's engine.

During the next few days Laurence and I took long walks on the beach and boatrides at night. Neither of us could stand to be in the house late at night, listening to Mama as she cried herself to sleep.

The days following Matt's death passed slowly. When Laurence returned to the university in Raleigh, I felt more alone than ever.

Some mornings I would awake after a restless night, look out of my window and gaze at the sea which used to bring my brothers and me so much happiness, but now only yielded pain with the remembrances. I would climb back between my cool sheets, searching for some sort of comfort or security.

Once Laurence returned to Wrightsville Sound for the summer, we became one another's support, offering a haven during a rough storm. Shortly after Laurence had returned to school, the authorities had caught the man who was responsible for Matt's death. When questioned, the man admitted to having killed him. He said it was an accident, that the gun went off without his pulling the trigger. I guess that is the statement I would expect to hear from a man who was to be tried for first degree murder. Once he was behind bars and awaiting trial, I felt a sense of peace within myself as well as with the rest of the world. I felt that perhaps justice would prevail and the whole ordeal would be over soon.

The morning after Laurence's return home from N.C. State for the summer, we awoke early while the sky was still a deep sapphire blue. Laurence came into my room that morning and woke me up, nudging me and gently brushing my matted bangs away from my face. "Let's go walk on the beach." he whispered. "The tide is out and the Northeaster

was blowing hard last night. We can climb out onto the jetty and look for shells." I rolled over on my stomach, my eyes still closed, resisting Laurence's plea. "Get up, Mary Claire! Please go with me." He hesitated, then added in a voice which was about to break, "I need you."

As I sat up to hug him, tears started brimming in his eyes. It was the first time I had seen him cry since Matt's death; he was finally letting go. It had always broken my heart to see one of my brothers crying. I reached for him, and we sat there holding one another, but not holding back the tears, which rolled slowly down our cheeks. We sat there clinging to each other until Laurence eased himself away from me. He looked at me and tried to smile--I think he was embarrassed that he had been crying. He gently wiped away my tears, then his own, with the back of his hand, then stood.

"Hurry up, Mary Claire. Maybe we can catch the end of the sunrise," Laurence said. "Meet me downstairs in a few minutes."

Still half asleep I got out of bed and walked wearily over to my closet. I drew on a pair of faded blue jeans and my holey Tretorns. I rummaged around in my closet for a sweatshirt to wear on the beach; since the Northeaster had been blowing, it was bound to be a little chilly, even though it was almost June. Not until I began to pull it over my head did I realize I had grabbed a sweatshirt that had belonged to Matt--it was a thick navy blue sweatshirt with the letters "W.F.U." stitched sturdily on the front

in gold; Wake Forest University--where Matt was to attend in the fall, fulfilling his lifelong dream to follow in Daddy's footsteps and attend Wake Forest. His acceptance letter had arrived in the mail the day before he died.

I started to take the sweatshirt off; then, instead, I pulled it down abruptly over my head, inhaling the sweet smell of my brother which still lingered within the fabric. Once again, I began to sob.

I grabbed a barret for my hair and a tissue for my eyes. Then I walked quietly down the wooden staircase, Laurence was waiting for me at the foot of the stairs, accompanied by Matt's golden retriever, Zack.

"Are you ready?" Laurence asked, as Zack licked the palm of my hand, his tongue rough and dry like sandpaper.

"I'm ready. Let's go."

As Laurence and I walked along the shoreline we talked of Matt and the years the three of us had shared. We even laughed a little. I climbed up on the old stone wall running parallel to the dunes, and Laurence held my hand as I walked along the narrow slab of stone, one foot in front of the other, carefully, so as not to fall. It was an overcast morning; the sky was filled with billowing clouds rolling fiercely in the gray above us. The Northeaster was still blowing, sending lily-covered whitecaps frolicking in the inlet. Laurence and I stood there for a long time looking out towards the horizon.

Finally, I climbed down off the sea-wall and I took my shoes off. Laurence and I took a seat on an eroding

dune. "Mary Claire," Laurence began, "the trial of the man who killed Matt is coming up in the fall."

"I know," I replied. "It's scheduled to begin in October. That's going to be pretty hard on Mama and Daddy, don't you think?" I drew circles in the sand with my toe. Around and around they went, the damp cool sand against the tender bottoms of my feet.

"It's going to be hard on all of us, Mary," Laurence answered.

"I know. I'm dreading it. Laurence--I don't know that I want to go on without Matt."

"I know, Mary, neither do I. But it's not just going to go away. We have to deal with it."

"You know, Laurence--my heart is filled with so much rage for the man who killed him. Yet a part of me knows that at some point I am going to have to let go of my anger. I have to Laurence," I cried. "If I don't, then my anger is going to destroy me."

"I can't forgive him, Mary. I just can't do it." Laurence rose and walked to the shoreline, leaving me alone there on the dune, hugging my knees up close to my chest.

I let Laurence stand alone at the water's edge for a few moments. Then I stood and walked to where he was standing. I hugged him from behind as hard as I could.

"Is any good supposed to come out of this, Mary Claire?" Laurence asked.

"I don't know, Laurence. I don't see how it possibly

could." I buried my tear-stained face into the back of my only brother.

We walked south for a little ways then climbed upon the jetty rocks, just like the three of us had loved to do when we were growing up. We walked three-quarters of a mile out--almost to the very tip. The waves lapped against the rocks, misting minute droplets of seawater upward, stinging my ankles and shins. Laurence's yellow all-weather jacket blew in the winds, its collar flapping against his flushed cheeks. We walked along the jetty, searching for conchs and sea urchins.

It was getting lighter outside; the tide would be coming in soon, so we headed back towards the shore. When we were almost back to the mainland, Laurence called my name. "Mary Claire! Look!" he exclaimed, pointing toward the horizon, where the sun was rising in soft apricots and golden yellows. We stood there, mesmerized by its beauty. It continued rising a few more moments, until it shone white in the heavens. I know we were both thinking of Matt as we gazed upward toward the rising sun.

Catherine Hart

"A Chair for Claudia"

by Lynn Smith

"Peace girl..." the sound echoes
within these walls
but she is gone.
"Peace girl..." the sound echoes
within the chambers of my heart
but she is gone.
I don't know...didn't know her--
and now she is gone--
a part of Peace
a part of me.
As eyes roam, hearts sink.
Now in place of that familiar face

an empty space

A long white dress hangs
on the closet door
its smooth satin never to touch
that thin body,
quaking with anticipation.
The hem never to graze the bright,
spring green grass of the front lawn.
A voice never to rise
"'neath the skies of blue..."
Drifting in the clean water
a single red rose...
for Meredith.

anonymous

November Rain

I woke up this morning
hoping that I'd find
it was all a hopeless dream,
a vision in my mind;
but then a breeze blew at my back
and danced swiftly down my spine
bringing harsh and cold reality--
no reasons and no rhymes.

The world keeps on moving
through this cold, November rain;
the night melts into morning
and the sunshine brightens day.
And seasons--they're still changing
leaving yesterdays behind;
empty shadows color memories
but you're still on my mind...

There just aren't any answers,
the world can't tell us why;
I stand alone as time moves on
never whispering "good-bye."
Please, God, hear my silent prayer
and hold her by your side;
and if she's crying, give her wings
and teach your precious angel how to fly.

The world keeps on moving
through this cold, November rain;
the night melts into morning
and the sunshine brightens day.
And seasons--they're still changing
leaving yesterdays behind;
empty shadows color memories
but you're still on my mind...

To Meredith with Love...
Karen Rives

This magazine is dedicated to the memory
of
Meredith Ellen Potts.

"Edward" by Kelli Jenkins

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